

I had attempted to register to speak in favor of SB 477 at the zoom hearing to be held March 28th, but am uncertain whether the request was properly submitted. Please accept this as my testimony in support of passage of SB 477, in particular Section 7, to establish a Commission on Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention.

I live in Bridgeport and serve as President of the Bridgeport Public Library and Reading Room, a designated Safe Place. I also was good friends with Tim and Kim Donnelly who were murdered by gun violence and whose daughter, Tara, is a signatory sponsor with Moms Demand Action, of the RYASAP Bridgeport Gun Violence Task Force Report.

The lack of data at the national level, frustrated by the refusal of Congress to permit funding for the CDC to adequately track gun violence as the result of the Dickey Amendment, demands that the states fill that void at least locally. Without evidence based, ground floor data, generated by the communities most affected, to address the public health need to combat the epidemic of gun violence on our streets (and tragically in our homes being destroyed by domestic violence or accidental youth access), we will continue to lament the loss of life with anecdotal handwringing. The best hope we have to reduce gun violence is to engage those most directly impacted, obtain data that the community will own that will enable buy-in to implement prevention and intervention measures that will emerge from and be supported by the communities suffering most from this societal scourge.

Our public libraries are a resource to provide alternatives for our youth to engage curiosity and arm them instead with knowledge to avoid the street life that turns deadly with the ready availability of guns. Just last night in Bridgeport a man was shot multiple times on the street outside our main Library after a disagreement in a nearby bar. Although the Library was closed, it cannot be a Safe Place if you cannot reach it safely, when the proliferation of guns make deadly violence the immediate method of dispute resolution.

Passage of SB 477 will provide a needed mechanism to develop data to establish strategies that can mitigate this cancer in our public health most effectively. I urge you to adopt SB 477 to create and empower the Commission on Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention.

Thank you . . . Jim

James E. O'Donnell
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